CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

49

AUGUST 1980

President : Mr G. Sitch Goldfields Nursery
Muckleford Ph. 72 2734
Secretary : Mr S. Bruton 23 View St
Castlemaine 72 3050
Treasurer: Mr L. Bransgrove 113 Lyttleton St C'mne
72 2772
Newsletter: Mr G. Broadway 7 Wheeler St C'mne
72 2513

FLOWERS OF THE CASTLEMAINE DISTRICT

ISOTOMA AXILLARIS

Rock Isotome by Rita Mills

Flowering : Late Spring to early Summer.

Rock Isotome is a bushy perennial herb, 30 cm high, which is found growing around granite rocks. It is particularly good on Nuggetty and on the granite of Mt Tarrengower.

Last year was a particularly good year and it gave a misty blue look to the hills west of Tarrengower.

The blue to mauve flowers are about 2.5 cm wide, on a 2.5 cm white corolla tube. The leaves are 10-20 cm long, narrow and deeply cut into narrow, jagged lobes.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE BUSH AT TARADALE ?

by Terry Collins

Has anyone been along the back road from Taradale to Drummond of late?

A fair proportion of bush area along the road is subdivided into small allotments and is being sold, apparently to weekenders who are clearing their blocks to suit their requirements; sundry shacks, caravans, you name it, with all the usual bits and pieces are being brought in. There appears to be little control over the erection of sundry items of habitation. This is a very disturbing situation which we hope does not occur near Castlemaine. A similar state of affairs happened years ago along the King Parrot Creek near Flowerdale, resulting in a beautiful clear running creek being lost forever.

A BIRD LIST FOR THE CASTLEMAINE SETTLING PONDS

from 1-6-79 to 31-5-80 Supplied by Stan Bruton

Hoary-headed Grebe
Little Pied Cormorant
White-faced Heron
Straw-necked Ibis
Royal Spoonbill
Black Swan
Black Duck
Pink-eared Duck
Wood Duck
Little Eagle
Dusky Moor-hen
Coot
Black-fronted Dotterel
Silver Gull
Welcome Swallow
Blackbird
Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Superb Blue Wren
Goldfinch
Red-browed Firetail Finch
Magpie-Lark
Willie Wagtail
Australian Magpie
Crimson Rosella

Little Grebe
White-necked Heron
White Ibis
Little Black Cormorant
Plumed Tree-duck
Mountain Duck
Grey Teal
White-eyed Duck
Musk Duck
Brown Falcon
Swamp-hen
Spurwing Plover
Japanese Snipe
Galah
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Flame Robin
Little Grass-Bird
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
House Sparrow
Starling
Silver-Eye
Red-rumped Parrot
Fuscous Honeyeater
Red Wattle-bird

CLUB RECORDS

The record system used by the Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club has been in use since the first few months of the Club's formation. The following article was written then by Mr M. Winterbottom

"Record cards have been printed for the Club to compile a detailed catalogue of the fauna and flora, geological and historical features of the Castlemaine area.

The card is in the main, self explanatory. The item category will refer to animal, plant, insect etc; each group will be given a letter for index purposes. If you can t fill in a card completely, bring it along to a meeting, if necessary with a specimen, and no doubt there will be someone who can supply the missing details.

The Castlemaine area has been divided into a number of regions in accordance with a widely accepted scheme and records will be indexed to these regions. A map showing these is printed on the next page., so that you can fill in the map area on each card that you prepare.

The success of this project will depend on club members. What is wanted is to know what is here and where it is. Don't worry if you think that your find is commonplace; fill out a card making sure that you give detailed information about where the item was found."

THE VICTORIAN GRID

Victoria has been divided into rectangles, measuring 1 degree of lattitude and 1½ degrees of longitude. These are identified by a letter as shown in the map. Castlemaine is near the North-west corner of block N.
The main blocks are further divided into 10 minute "squares". these are approximately 18 km x 14 km, and are numbered from 1 to 54. Thus, Castlemaine is in block N2.

The main advantage of us using this system is that our records can then be compared with records from other organisations. For example, the Bird Atlas uses the same blocks (although numbering is different)

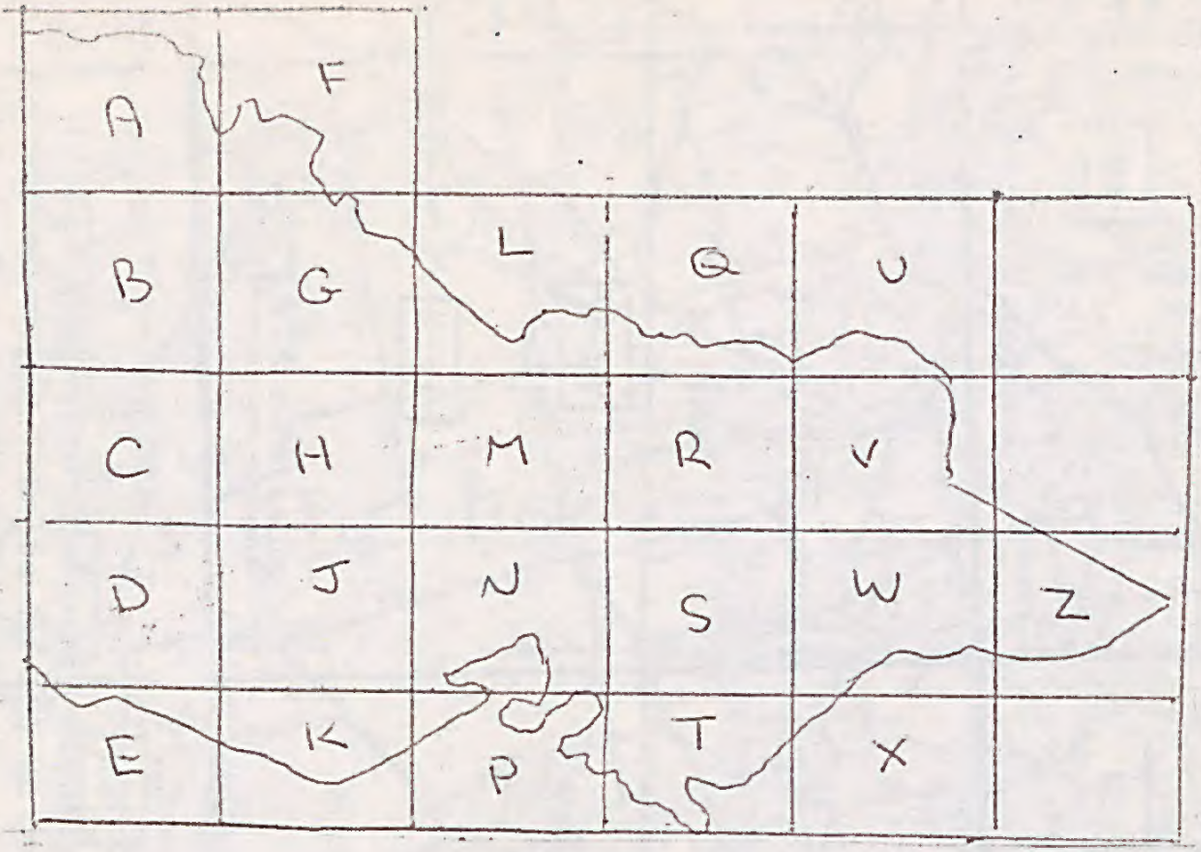
B	Bird	I	Invertebrate, Insect
R	Reptile	G	Geological
A	Amphibian	H	Historical
M	Mammal	P	Plant

The Castlemaine Grid

Major Grid: See Plants in Victoria -Willis etc
or : Victoria 1: 250 000 maps.

(It is suggested that club members keep their own record of cards filled in. One way of doing this is to use an exercise book- all A entries on the first page, B on the second and so on)

Blank Page Digitally Inserted



The state Grid.

Castlemaine is in block N.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54

The 1 minute grid numbers.

Castlemaine is in block N2

A sample record card

MAP AREA N2 CATEGORY B

SCIENTIFIC NAME	
COMMON NAME	Whiteface
LOCATION AND MAP REFERENCE	North-eastern corner of Wattle flat forest
HABITAT	On gravel road
COMMENTS	Several, feeding with Yellow-Tailed Thornbills, at edge of bush

Nº OF SPECIMENS		
SINGLE	FEW	COMMON
	✓	

MEMBERS SIGNATURE E Perkins

DATE 25/5/80

Scientific name not known, so left blank

Description of locality

Further notes could be written on the back

GRASSHOPPERS

by Terry Collins

Just how tough are these pests ? They apparently survive large variations of temperature. We have seen them in century degree heat but how about the other end of the scale?

The date was last May 16 (1979) and the place near Kiandra, N.S.W. at about 4,500 ft with four inches of snow on the ground and the top of the tussocks and bushes showing above. The sun was shining and to our amazement hundreds of grasshoppers were jumping from tussock to tussock as lively as could be. The nights went below zero yet these creatures were surviving well. We placed two in a jar and carried them around in the van; feeding them fresh grass every couple of days, They stayed alive for 19 days and were only killed by placing the jar on a window sill in the hot sun. The extra heat through the glass was too much.

TERMITES TO BRING LIFE TO THE DESERT

Attempts to reclaim desert areas after strip mining are often made more difficult as the mine spoils lack bacteria, fungi, and other organisms which contribute to soil fertility. In the U.S.A. where considerable research has been done, plant growth is not often limited by lack of Phosphorus or Potassium, but more often it is Nitrogen which is deficient. Experimental evidence suggests that improved plant growth could be achieved by addition of Nitrogen even in areas of low rainfall.

One method of adding Nitrogen to soil which shows exciting promise is by making use of the desert termite. These animals can exist on old newspapers or other such litter, or wood which contains virtually no Nitrogen. However their bodies can contain up to 40% protein. They do this by having an arrangement with bacteria in their gut which are able to extract Nitrogen from the air, using as a supply of energy the cellulose ingested by the termites. Eventually this Nitrogen is added to the soil as faecal material or when the termites die.

Land which is being reclaimed is contour ploughed, and suitable litter is dumped in the furrows, where its presence is quickly detected by the termites, which rapidly convert it and the crushed rock into good soil.

from Monash Review, March '80

CASTLEMAINE FIELD . NATURALISTS CLUB PROGRAM

Meetings

Friday Aug 8
Film Night : A variety of nature films will be shown, courtesy of the Bank of N.S.W.

Sept. 12
A surprise night :
(In other words, details of the evening were not available at time of printing).

October 10
Speaker : Mr T. Harrap of Ballarat C.A.E.
Subject: The rain forest, the loss of Red Cedar, and birds.

Castlemaine State Festival
It was decided at the last committee meeting that the club would contribute to the Festival in November by again running bus tours of the district, and by conducting walking tours through Kaweka to point out local flora.

Outings

Aug 9 Saturday, half day. Meet 1.30
A stroll through the Northern area of Kalimna.
Meet in the High School car park at the far end adjacent to Kalimna
An easy walk of approx 2 km.

Sept. 13
A stroll through the bush at Chewton
Leader: G. Sitch. Meet at Ed. Centre at 1.30

Monday Sept. 22. C'maine Show Day
The annual long march.
This year the walk is from Green Gully bridge to Goldfields Nursery at Muckleford.
Meet at Ed. Centre at 9.00 a.m. or at Green Gully at 9.15.
Approx dist. 5 miles (Airborne Raven)

October 11. It has been suggested that we join the W.V.F.N.C. outing at Maryborough. More details later.

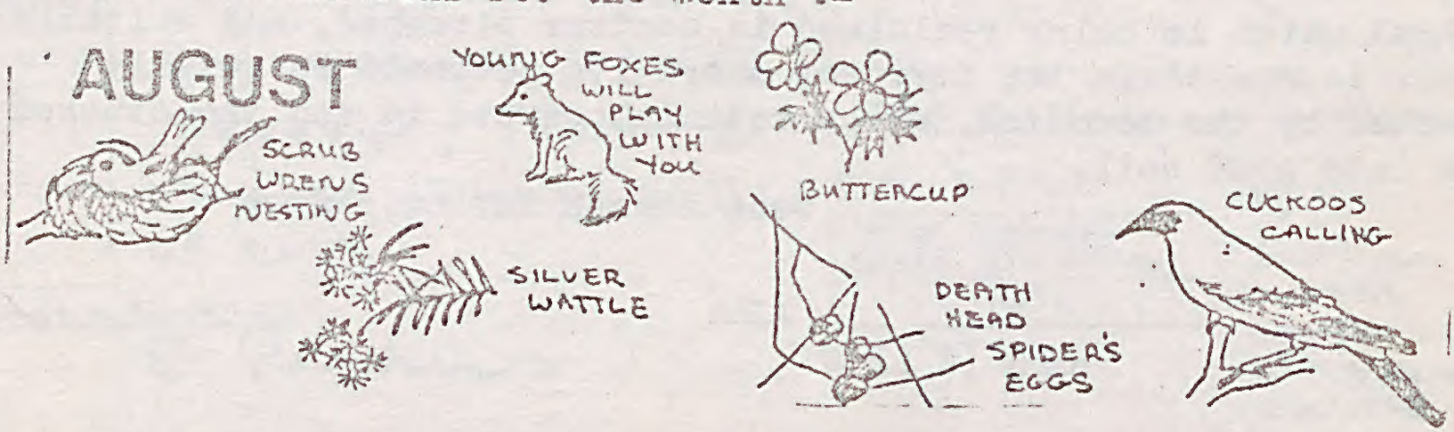
Reminisce with Ray

Gleanings from the files of the "Mount Alexander Mail"
by Ray Bradfield

Flying Foxes

Flying Foxes in great numbers are in Gippsland and in N.S.W. They have also been seen in a 'flying visit' to Melbourne. One of these, shot in Studley Park measured 3 feet four inches across, and it was among others of larger size which got away.
March 23rd 1863

Nature observations for the month :-



GRAMPIANS CAMPOUT

MAJOR MITCHELL PLATEAU — Nov. 15-16 1980

It is proposed to hold an excursion to the Major Mitchell Plateau, the third weekend in November. Some members have expressed the desire to spend the weekend in the Grampians. To adjudge the amount of interest in this weekend, could you fill in the questionnaire if you intend to participate, and hand it to Geoff Sitch at the next meeting.

There are a number of Motels in Hall's Gap, also Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds. Each member will be responsible for their own accommodation, food, etc. Further details will be available in a later newsletter.

WARNING

The climb to the Plateau is strenuous. Some parts are steep, and some are rocky. Young children would probably find the walk tiring, and older people would need to be able walkers.

However, the plant life, animal life, and spectacular scenery are ample compensation for the exertion.

The Saturday could be spent touring the waterfalls in the Grampians. This would be mainly driving with short walks.

A one day trip to the Plateau would necessitate leaving Castlemaine at 7 a.m.

Please detach and hand in

Name _____

I/we are interested in		Yes	No
	a Two Day campout	☐	☐
	Plateau only	☐	